

"Nomads of the North"



JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD.

TO read the pages of naturalists like Theodore Roosevelt, Edward Stewart White and Hudson (to select at random three contemporaries in this field) is to have the reward of pleasure among other satisfactions. Such men go out into the forests, plains and mountains and see the fauna of such habitats in their true light and so set it down in their books. But writers like James Oliver Curwood, as represented by such a book as *Nomads of the North*, seem to think they are only painting the truth about wild life when they smear their pages with brutality and blood. Curwood's latest tale is devoted to describing the adventures of a bear cub and a very mongrel pup dog which are brought together in the Hudson Bay country by a factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and who, through the accident of being thrown out of their master's canoe while indulging in a fight, have to live their young days together in the wilderness.

The wilderness, to Curwood, is a place of bloody, brutal fights for existence by all animals and birds. The bear cub and

the pup are made to look upon this life from the viewpoint of the literary human as we read of Miki, the pup, feeling that "about him was the Big Adventure" which is nature faking at its worst. We progressed as far as page 124 and then we could stomach this brutality no longer. Since reading *Pan Michael* we can recall no horrors so revolting as those told in the last few pages we read here. Conscience made us dip into the last section of the tale and in the picture of the reformed "tame bear of Lac Basin," the wild and elderly cub, we thought of those reformed human brutes that Dickens loved to sketch in their old age in his final chapters, like Mr. Dombey, for example. The term "nature faking" served a very admirable purpose. We wish some naturalist would arise who, with as precise a taste for satire, could put the quietus on such brutalizing of nature as appears in these pages. It is like describing man's life as depending solely on the methods and results of the slaughter house.

NOMADS OF THE NORTH. BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.50.

"The Man Who Couldn't Sleep"

THE king or commoner who indulges in nocturnal adventures is an old friend in fiction and when properly reintroduced is seldom a failure. Arthur Stringer proves this literary axiom once again in the group of episodes of criminal night life in New York city gathered together under the intriguing title *The Man Who Couldn't Sleep*. The hero of the ten tales related is introduced lamely enough but convincing in so far as the reason for his insomnia is concerned. A writer of fiction "goes stale" and in an effort to rid himself of his particular devil of sleeplessness he has his chauffeur drive him through the night at law destroying rates of speed. The chauffeur is a crook and to blackmail his employer pretends they ran over and killed a man in the outskirts of

Brooklyn. Some rumor of this gets about among the sleepless man's club fellows and even causes Mary Lockwood, his fiancée, to break off their engagement.

Then Witter Kerfoot, such is the unblushing combination of two well known literary names owned by the hero, lets himself run wild in pursuit of nocturnal adventures in Madison Square, where *The Stolen Wheel Code* begins, as does the episode of *The Man From Medicine Hat*; along the North River front, scene of *The Panama Gold Chests* and the beginning of the exciting tale of *The Dummy Chucker*; a Broadway theatre, where *A Rialto Rain-storm* opens, and in Gramercy Park, from where down to lower New York we follow Kerfoot and Criswell into an office to find the secret of *The Thumb-Tap Clue*. Quite the best of these episodes is reserved to the last, the one called *The Nile-Green Roadster* driven by Mary Lockwood. For in this not only are Mary and Witter reunited, but Witter's chauffeur gets his "comeuppance" and the mystery of the "killing" of that hapless pedestrian in the outskirts of Brooklyn is made plain. The atmosphere of New York in its eerie hours is set down here with telling effect and most of the adventures are crisp with excitement. Surely no reader will ever fall asleep while following Witter Kerfoot's adventures in search of that boon.

THE MAN WHO COULDN'T SLEEP. BY ARTHUR STRINGER. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$1.75.

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